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TAGS: [ECON](#) [IZ](#) [PGOV](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQ EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE - FEB 29

¶1. Summary. PM Maliki and DPM Salih co-chaired the 29 February 2008 IESC in support of the Baghdad Security Plan (Fardh Al-Qannon). The meeting featured lengthy discussion of steps being taken to improve electricity in Baghdad, PM Maliki's number one priority. More optimism than usual was sounded at the improved ability to bring a higher percentage of Baghdad's capacity online this summer. Also discussed were the widespread contamination of Baghdad's water supply and the severe shortage of medicines and equipment at Baghdad's hospitals. End Summary

BOC Finds No Security Problems at 9 Stations

¶2. Gen. Aboud, Commander of Baghdad, reported a review of Baghdad city's nine electricity distribution stations and found that none of the station managers stated that they faced significant security threats. (Note. Aboud's findings contradict previous allegations from the Ministry of Electricity (MoE) that security threats to stations are significantly impairing Baghdad's electricity supply. End Note). In response to PM Maliki comments that stations managers must be held responsible for poor performance, the MoE indicated that he himself had made visits to the station and had fired 7 employees for negligence and punished others for absence. Aboud stated that his forces would coordinate with the MoE to review the seven stations in Baghdad's suburbs in coming weeks.

CG Urges Diversified Imports

¶3. CG Petraeus congratulated the MoE on recent efforts to repair the major 400 KB power lines that supply Baghdad and urged that the GoI take every step possible to diversify electricity and diesel imports to enable Baghdad's generators to run a full capacity this summer. CG Petraeus noted that Kuwait diesel imports were now averaging 1 M L/day - below the contract stipulated amount of 1.3 M, but much better than in previous months. CG Petraeus also sounded an optimistic note about the potential of hydroelectric generation to improve from its current very low level given increased snow pack in Turkey. (Comment. Iraq is suffering a tremendous drought this year and river levels are very low. For example, agricultural production in Erbil province is down more than 90% from last year. End Comment).

Holdups in Payments to Turkish Company Kartek

¶4. To the dissatisfaction of DPM Salih, the MoE gave a lengthy explanation that a lengthily bureaucratic process within the Ministry of Finance was holding up the \$4.5 million payment for already installed capacitors to Kartek, a Turkish company that. DPM Salih labeled this an excuse and instructed the MoE to resolve the issue immediately. (End Comment. Unless payment is received by 31 March. Turkey will once again cease exporting power to Iraq. Failure to pay the

Turkish electricity bill on time is a recurring problem for the MoE. End Comment.)

Erbil Privately Financed Generation

¶15. Dr. Ahmed Chalabi, Chair of the Essential Services Committee, stated that Erbil would be able to fully meet its electricity needs by the summer due to the construction of new privately financed power stations. Dr. Chalabi urged the GoI to enter into purchase contracts with these plants and to incentivise private sector electricity plant construction in the rest of the country.

Baghdad's Water Contaminated

¶16. The Minister of Environment gave a report on Baghdad's distressed water quality, noting that 90% of water is contaminated and that hospitals had resorted to utilizing bottled water for surgeries. The Minister noted that decrepit infrastructure, severe contamination of Iraq's river systems, and insufficient electricity for pumping plants were the roots of the problem.

¶17. In response to comments from the Ministry of Environment that a cholera epidemic was likely to reemerge in coming months, Ambassador Crocker urged a preemptive wide-spread GoI public education campaign. DPM Salih instructed the Minister of Environment to lead a crisis committee on water contamination and cholera with representatives of the ministries of electricity, health, municipalities, and the Amanat. CG Petraeus offer of assistance from the Gulf Regional Division and the Energy Fusion Cell was warmly received.

Hospital News

¶18. The Deputy Minister of Health gave updates on the good progress of converting Al Karkh and Al Yarmook Hospitals into facilities dedicated to the treatment of Iraqi Security Forces. The Minister of Defense noted the role of the IESC in producing the Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Health that allowed this progress.

¶19. The Deputy Minister of Health gave a summary of problems facing Baghdad's hospitals, noting that many were in a state of crisis due to insufficient resources. Among the problems the Deputy Minister listed were a lack of:

- specialized equipment such as CT scanners and dialysis machines
- medical waste incinerators
- blood storage bags
- sufficient medicine and antibiotics
- fuel to run electricity generators
- a clean water supply.

¶10. The Deputy Minister also complained that a Ministry of Finance cap on the number of overtime hours that can be worked by GoI employees was affecting medical services.

¶11. Calling the situation in Baghdad's hospitals a crisis, DPM Salih noted that the current Ministry of Health officials, in place for only 2 months, are the first competent officials to hold such positions in Iraq's history.

DPM Salih said that many of the measures put in place, such as contracting caps on medical purchases and overtime hours, put in place previously must be removed. DPM Salih told the Deputy Minister that he and Dr. Chalabi would meet with him the following day to address these problems.

Security for Shia Pilgrimage Lauded

¶12. CG Petraeus congratulated the GoI and the Baghdad Operations Command for the relatively successful mass Abra'en pilgrimage that took place last week in Karbala. CG Petraeus

noted that an estimated 10 million Iraqis visited the city and that only one major security incident took place (the suicide bombing in Iscandariyah). Gen Aboud stated that not just the quantity of security forces improved, but also their quality as new techniques were used at checkpoints, in body searches and by snipers.

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